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नमस्ते शारदे देवि काश्मीर पुरवासिनि

*Wishing You
a
Happy and
Inspiring*

5075

(Saptarishi Samvat)

The Significance of Navreh

A Shakta interpretation

by Dr. C. L. Raina

Kashmiri Pandits celebrate their New Year's Day, Navreh, on Chaitra Shukla Pratipada or the first day of the bright fortnight of the month of Chaitra. The word 'Navreh' is derived from Sanskrit 'Nava Varsha' meaning the New Year. On the eve of Navreh, which falls on Amavasya or the last night of the dark fortnight, they keep a *thali* filled with rice, a cup of curds, a bread, cooked rice, some walnuts, an inkpot and a pen, a silver coin and the Panchanga of the New Year, as the first thing to be seen at the Brahma Muhurta or the wee hours. The Panchanga popularly known as *Nechi Patri* (Nakshatra Patri) is an almanac giving important astrological configurations and auspicious *tithis* or dates and other useful religious information for the coming year. Keeping the *Nechi Patri* handy for consultation is a tradition followed in every Kashmiri Pandit household where religious and even social obligations are performed according to the *tithis*, mathematically calculated in it.

This Navreh, the Saptarishi era followed by the Kashmiri Pandits is entering its 5075th year (falling on 18th March of the Christian calendar). Imagine for a while the perfection with which such a span of time had been calculated by their ancestors to the minutest of minute unit of time *pala*, *vipala* etc. with the help of their knowledge of *iyotishya* and *phalit shastra*. The Navreh Mavas, or the concluding day of the year is to be succeeded by the Pratipada or the first Navaratra. In mathematics 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9 are natural numbers. Then there is zero or *shunya*. *Shunya* is nothingness, but it is also the *param bindu* of the Nava Durga, meditated upon at the *sandhi* or conjunction of Amavasya and Pratipada. Symbolically, the Nava Durgas are the nine fold projections of the supreme-self, which can be observed in the Shrichakra or Shri Yantram at the Sharika Parvat in Kashmir.

On the sacred Pratipada day the *ishta devi* is invoked with the *dhyana mantra* and the *bija mantra* while having the first look at the Nakshatra Patri or Panchanga. That is why the Kashmiri Pandits used to go the Sharika Parvat (Hari Parvat) and pay their obeisance at the Chakreshwara, reciting the Bhavani

Sahasranama, Indrakshi and other Devi Stotras and praying for prosperity for the new year in an auspiciousness suffused with *karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti*. That is what the primary triangle of the Chakreshwara stands for. The Primary triangle according to the Saptashati Hridayam denotes the interaction between the *nada* and the *bindu*. It is the eternal seed filled with the primal vibration of Aum or Aim. It sports, gets multiplied, assumes names and forms and sustains for *kalpas* or aeons together, then reverts back to the *moola bindu* or the original bindu, which is *nirakara* or formless.

This is what the yogis mystically experience on the sacred first day of the Navaratras, and is summed up in:

“श्रीचक्र प्रिय बिन्दु तर्पण परा श्री राजराजेश्वरी”

It is a nine-fold Mantra, just as the Shri Chandi Mantra is, and is read as

‘ऐं ह्रीं क्लीं चामुण्डायै विच्चे’.

The Shakti worshipers of Kashmir see all the facets of Shri Chandi in Shri Sharika whose divine presence fills every syllable of the sixteen-syllabled *bija mantra* at Chakreshwara.

They find in it eternal vibrations of Shiva and Shakti presented by geometrical configuration. The dots, angle, triangle, straight line, intersection of curves forming petals and outer squares are but concepts denoting manifestation of Shakti in the external Universe. To realise Shakti within oneself, the Kashmir Shaktas pray to the *matrikas* — the phonemes of the *mantras* -- to vibrate and re-vibrate from *pratipada* to *mahanavmi*. The Navdurgas or the nine facets of Durga are visualised as Shailaputri, Brahmakumari, Chandraghanta, Kushmanda, Skandamata, Katyayani, Kalaratri, Mahagauri and Siddhidhatrī put in an ascending order. This order symbolises the journey through consciousness or *chaitanya*.

So when the first ray of the sun descends on the earth on Chaitra Shukla Pratipada, the Kashmiri Pandits celebrate the presence of Durga, the Supreme Mother among them as Navreh, the New Year's Day.

'SHARIRAM HAVIH!'

It is a little over two years when the NSKRI came into existence. Two years is not a long period in the life of an institution, particularly one that is engaged in a stupendous task like keeping the heart of a culture ticking at a time when it is assailed by hostile forces intent upon sniffing the life out of it. That the NSKRI has come up with a well-thought out agenda that could well provide the necessary oxygen to ensure the survival of Kashmiri Pandit culture and its rejuvenation is no mean an achievement. NSKRI's perception of what constitutes a cultural emergency for the Pandits is not the product of an agitated imagination but an assessment based on chilling facts about the possibility of their extinction as a distinct socio-cultural entity.

The horrors that have driven the Institute to a commitment to preserving the Kashmiri Pandit heritage and cultural identity are too overwhelming to be ignored or considered imaginary. If steps are not taken immediately to ward them off, the whole community is likely to suffer a shock more severe than anyone can imagine even as it is struggling to come to terms with the trauma of its uprootment. Already time is flying too fast for retrieval of whatever is left of its shattered and scattered heritage -- its lore and legends, its literature, its art and artifacts, its horde of books and manuscripts, its philosophical attainments, and even the values and ideals that have been cherished by it for centuries.

Things already appear to be going out of hands for the stunned and stupefied members of this hapless community. The cultural onslaught, some would like even to call it cultural genocide, that was set into motion particularly after independence, seems to have almost succeeded in disrupting the Kashmiri Pandit way of life. The well-orchestrated distortion and falsification of facts has been so powerful that it has already resulted in creating an impression that Kashmir is but a colony of West Asian and Islamic cultural empire with 5000 years of its Hindu-Buddhist traditions having been just an illusion. Mahayana Buddhism, Shaiva renaissance, marvels of art and architecture, glorious contributions to Indian aesthetical and philosophical traditions, and to learning and scholarship, masterpieces of Sanskrit literature, the indigenous Sharada script branching out into Gurmukhi and Bodhi, all add up to nothing! All that matters is what happened after the advent of Islam in the 14th century.

But why complain of those who are led to accepting the spurious and rejecting the real? The real threat comes from the enemy within. There are people in the Kashmiri Pandit community itself who are interested in perpetuating lies and falsehoods about the true journey of culture in Kashmir. Those whose perception of the whole situation is spoon-deep. Then there are those who have opened political shops to peddle their solutions to the Kashmir issue, considering culture to be only of peripheral importance. Why, there are even demagogues and their sidekicks who taunt those concerned about preserving the community's cultural identity, mocking them for pleading for culture. Yet another kind are those who belong to comatose organisations which won't do anything and won't like others to do anything. It is pathetic that such people are afraid of asking even the basic cultural questions and seeking solutions to them, their phobias arising mostly from their personal ambitions. For the NSKRI, the whole thing is clear -- if you lose your identity, you lose the meaning of your existence!

Contd.

Fortunately, however, for the community, the scenario is not altogether dismal. There are genuine scholars and cultural experts who belong to the community and are making valuable contributions in different fields. Some of them are quite young, but have acquired a maturity of perception and seriousness of attitude at once refreshing and reassuring. Then there are those who have devoted long decades of their lives to research and scholarly pursuits and are still active in their work. NSKRI is happy that a good number of these genuine scholars and researchers are with it or are appreciative of its efforts.

During the little over last two years of its existence, the NSKRI has been able to create a space for itself even if there are some who are trying to nibble at that space. It has organised several exhibitions, seminars, symposia and discussions to preserve and promote Kashmiri Pandit culture, having made its mark with ventures like "Unmeelan", the first ever exhibition on Kashmiri Pandit cultural heritage held in April 1998. A real eye-opener. While work on encyclopaedia of Kashmiri culture has already begun, a basic book on the history and culture of the Kashmiri Pandits is under preparation. Critical editions of Kashmiri classics and introductory books on Kashmir Shaivism and Shakta philosophy are also part of the Institute's ambitious publications programme. Other projects which have been accorded top priority include search and documentation of Sharada manuscripts and production of video films on cultural subjects. The Institute will also try to set up a heritage centre in Delhi for the benefit of those interested in Kashmir studies.

Shariram havih -- the body is the sacrificial food -- say the Shiva Sutras. And we at NSKRI have decided to dedicate both body and soul to the cause we stand for.

Preparations afoot for Seminar on Kashmir Shaivism

A seminar on Kashmir Shaivism, which has for long been on the high priority list of NSKRI, will be held in Delhi on April 11, '99. Preparations for the seminar, which will reflect on the Shaiva way of life, are in full swing.

Over twenty eminent scholars of Kashmir Shaivism have been approached with the request for presenting their papers on different aspects of the philosophical school and sharing their insight with an aware and expectedly highly inquisitive audience. A number of these scholars have responded positively and indicated their willingness to participate. The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan will collaborate with NSKRI in organising the event.

The idea is to create a greater awareness about the concepts, doctrines and vision that constitute the Kashmir school of Shaivism -- a three-fold philosophical system that has extended the frontiers of Indian thought and has at the same time become central to the defining and understanding of Kashmir's cultural identity.

The seminar, the first of its kind to be held in the Capital, will mark a renewed focus on a philosophy that has taken its birth in Kashmir but has transmitted its appeal to the whole of the country and beyond. The papers presented at the seminar will be later published in a book form to make Kashmir Shaivism more comprehensive for the layman. They are expected to cover not only the monastic but also non-monastic and devotional schools of the Shaivite cult which were quite popular in Kashmir. The links between the Trika philosophy of Kashmir and the Shiya Siddhanta of the South are also likely to be explored. Works of the great masters of Trika from Vasugupta and Somananda to Utpala and Abhinavgupta together with their modern-day interpretations and explanations by venerable seers like Swami Ram and Ishwar Swaroop Swami Lakshman Joo will be among the subjects that will be taken up to present the whole spectrum of Kashmir Shaivite movement.

"Kashmir is not only the crown but the brain of India"-- Jagmohan

Communication Minister Releases video-cassette of NSKRI Documentary on Kailash-Manasarovar Yatra

Communication Minister Shri Jagmohan released the video cassette of NSKRI's 90- minute documentary film, 'A Pilgrimage to Kailash and Manasarovar' at a glittering ceremony at Mavlankar Auditorium, New Delhi on February 28, 1999. Lighting the ceremonial lamp to launch the film and inaugurate its premiere, Shri Jagmohan described it as "a great effort, a great work of art". "It is a reminder of Kashmir's great cultural links with the rest of India", he said. "Kashmir's relationship with India is deep and not superficial. It is a relationship of mind and soul. It did not start in 1947 but goes back to more than 5,000 years."



Hon'ble Communication Minister, Shri Jagmohan lighting the ceremonial lamp

"The so-called intellectuals of the country, the newsmen, the writers", he said "have failed to project the essential features of this relationship, and have instead been harping on peripheral things like accession and Article 370. Kashmiri's have provided the best philosophies that the Indian mind could think of and Kashmir Shaivism is the best example of it."



Shri Jagmohan delivering his speech at the premiere of 'A Pilgrimage to Kailash and Manasarovar'

The documentary film has been produced by Smt. Radhika Gopinath, while the concept, camera work and direction is that of Shri C.V. Gopinath. It has been scripted by Shri S.N. Pandita and Shri Gopinath. The NSKRI has lent institutional support to the production.

Complementing Shri C.V. Gopinath for being inspired by real spirituality in making the documentary, Shri Jagmohan said that pilgrimages elevate the mind and bring out the divinity within man. "They stress the essential unity of Indian



Shri Jagmohan releasing the video cassette of 'A Pilgrimage to Kailash and Manasarovar'

culture", he observed, adding that 'Kashmir to Kanyakumari' is not just as empty phrase, but a reality of which every place, every stone in Kashmir is a reminder.

Shri Jagmohan concluded his brief but much applauded speech by stressing that, "Indian culture is very strong." The cultural ties that bind Kashmir



Communication Minister being presented a set of video cassettes by Dr. S. S. Toshkhani Chairman NSKRI

and the rest of India, he emphasised, "will be further strengthened." "The Shakti that lies within the Kashmiri mind will go up and up", he said. "Kashmir is not just the Crown of India as is often said, but the brain of India", he concluded amidst thunderous applause, referring to the intellectual capabilities of the uprooted Kashmiri Pandits.

Earlier welcoming Shri Jagmohan and other distinguished guests, Dr. S. S. Toshakhani, Chairman NSKRI, said that, 'A pilgrimage to Kailash and Manasarover' was a tribute to India's age old spirituality. "It seeks to project the Himalayan heritage, the promotion



Shri Jagmohan being seen off after the function



Apeksha Pandita reciting the Saraswati Vandana, while Shri Jagmohan Smt. Radhika Gopinath and Shri C.V. Gopinath listen appreciatively.

of which is one of the primary objectives of our Institute", he said, giving a brief introduction of the work done by the NSKRI during the last little over two years.

Shri S.N. Pandita, Secretary NSKRI, spoke about the production and concept of the documentary film, and the vision that drove Shri C.V. Gopinath to make it. He described Shri Gopinath as a profound scholar of the Vedas and Upanishads and a great friend of the Kashmiri Pandit community.

The ceremony started with the young Apeksha Pandita reciting the famous invocation to Goddess Sharada Devi,

*"Namaste Sharada Devi
Kashmir Puravasini"*



A view of the distinguished gathering



Another view of the gathering

Shri C.V. Gopinath, who conceived and shot the film, talked about his background and the sources of his inspiration as well as the process that went into making of the film. It was a film shot not from the angle of tourism or natural beauty but for the ultimate spiritual experience that it provided, he said. That is why it was suffused with chants and recitations from the Vedas and the Upanishads -- something that had inspired him from his childhood days, he added. The pilgrimage to Kailash and Manasarovar, (that he twice undertook) he explained, take away the blues and the depression one gets while living a mechanical life and provides a deep spiritual solace. " We have to go back to our cultural roots", he stressed, talking of the religious inspiration being his effort.

Dr. S.S. Toshkhani presented one cassette of the video-film to Shri Jagmohan on behalf of NSKRI. Later the film was screened for showing to the distinguished audience who felt captivated by the shots of the breathtaking Himalayan scenery and bewitched by the unforgettable glory of Mount Kailash and Manasarovar that it presented. The 90-minute film was punctuated throughout with the narration of myths and legends surrounding the various holy places enroute, with their spiritual ambience accentuated by chants and recitations from the Vedas, Upanishads, and other holy texts set to soul enthralling Karanataka music.

Swami Gokalananda, Secretary, Sri Ramakrishana Mission, Delhi graced the occasion for a brief while to give his blessings.

NSKRI decides to institute 'Abhinavgupta Samman' to honour scholars

NSKRI has decided to institute an award, named the 'Abhinavgupta Samman' after the great Shaiva philosopher and aesthetician, Abhinavgupta of Kashmir, to honour scholars. The Samman will carry with it a sum of Rs. 1,000 as award money besides a shawl, a citation and a gold-plated plaque with Abhinavgupta's figure inscribed on it. It shall be accorded to a scholar or researcher for his/her outstanding contribution in various fields of Kashmir studies including philosophy, religion, art, culture, dance, theatre, music, language, literature, aesthetics, folklore, epigraphy etc. The award shall, however, not be given for creative literature or translation.

While according the Samman, evaluation will be made on the basis of the overall contribution of a scholar in his or her field and his/her general impact on the scholarly scene in that field. Selection for the honour will be the responsibility of a selection committee whose members will be chosen from among noted scholars, writers, researchers,

intellectuals, artists and cultural experts. It will be headed by an eminent scholar of national or international repute. The selection committee members will make their recommendations with utmost care, fairness and impartiality and in accordance with rules and regulations for the Samman which are in the process of being framed. The decision will be taken collectively by the committee and will be considered final.

The first Abhinavgupta Samman will be accorded in the year 2000, and thereafter yearly. No Samman may, however, be awarded in a particular year if the selection committee is of the opinion that no scholar comes up to the standard expected for it. The Samman itself is expected to promote and raise the standard of research and scholarship in Kashmir studies, which at present is not receiving encouragement from any quarter. It needs to be clarified here that the scope of the Samman will be limited to scholarly work relating to Kashmir's Hindu culture and heritage only.

Prof. Jagaddhar Zadoo

-- One of the Last Titans

[He was a titan among scholars of Kashmir -- that is alone how Prof. Jagaddhar Zadoo (JDZ) can be described for his immense contribution to Sanskrit scholarship. But a very shy and unassuming titan, wearing his great erudition with utmost humility. Be it the first critical edition of the Nilamata Purana which he brought out together with Prof. Kanji Lal, or a part of the Gilgit Manuscripts which he edited with Dr. J. C. Dutt, the Lokaprikasha of Kshemendra or the Udamareshwara Tantra, the works that JDZ took up for study opened a whole world of discovery about life in ancient and medieval Kashmir. He translated profusely from Sanskrit and English and Kashmiri, and even Urdu, edited a number of Shaiva texts, worked with Japanese and Russian scholars, yet preferred to remain away from the glare and glitter of publicity. Mahamahopadhyaya, Vidya Martanda, Doctor of Indology, were some of the titles conferred upon him which could have turned any Sanskrit scholar's head crazy, but not JDZ's. His gravitation towards learning was natural to him, for he belonged to a family that has produced some of the most illustrious Sanskrit scholars of Kashmir.]

Soft-spoken, mild-mannered and humble, Prof. Jagaddhar Zadoo (JDZ) never raised his voice to make a point, but he was head and shoulders above many prone to beating their own drums in the world of academics in Kashmir. Even after a lifetime of achievements in the field he chose to adopt, he never thought much of them. Born in November 1890, he came from a family where Sanskrit scholarship was something that flowed in the veins. The great Pandit Keshav Bhatt Shastri who adored the court of Maharaja Ranbir Singh as head astrologer, was his grandfather. The most celebrated scholar of Shaiva lore Pandit Harbhatta Shastri was his uncle. And Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Mukund Ram Shastri whose unusual brilliance and outstanding erudition won him tremendous respect in academic circles in India and Europe, was his father-in-law. No wonder, therefore, that JDZ took to Sanskrit learning as naturally as fish take to water.

The Zadoos originally belonged to Zadipur, a village near Brijbehara, Kashmir from where they migrated to Srinagar in the beginning of the 18th century. JDZ's grandfather Pandit Keshav Bhatt, was chosen by Maharaja Ranbir Singh as his Raja Jyotishi and was consulted by George Buhler for his work on the



Pippalada Shakha of Atharvaveda. Young JD took his first examination in Sanskrit, Pragya, from the Punjab University, Lahore, in 1904 when he was just 14. In 1915 he obtained the degree of Shastri from the same university following it with M.A. in Sanskrit in 1920 and MOL (Master of Oriental Languages) in 1921. It was in 1921 that he joined the Jammu and Kashmir Research Department as Head Pandit and worked on that post till 1924. From 1924 to 1927, JDZ taught Sanskrit at the Prince of Wales College, Jammu in place of the legendary Dr. Siddheshwar Verma, who had gone to Oxford for his D. Litt. Eventually JDZ became Professor of Sanskrit at Sri Pratap College, Srinagar in 1931 after completing his second stint as Head Pandit in the Research Department from 1928 to 1931, a post he held till 1946. He taught Sanskrit again at the Government College for Women, Srinagar from 1951 to 1953. In 1953 he became the founder Principal of the Mahila Mahavidyalaya at Srinagar and worked there till 1975 when he retired from active life.

When, in 1924, JDZ brought out the first critical edition of the Nilamata Purana working jointly with Prof. R.K. Kanjilal, it was hailed as a momentous work in academic circles. For the first time that rich treasure house of information about religious, cultural and social life of ancient Kashmir as well as traditions, customs and beliefs of its people was made accessible to researchers and scholars. Yet, sadly enough, this valuable edition of the Nilamata Purana for which alone JDZ's name could have been remembered by generations to come, is unavailable today, not even the nearest kin of the scholar having a copy of it, not to speak of the manuscript prepared

was the Loka Prakasha of Kshemendra, the polyglot who used satire for the first time in Sanskrit literature as an effective social weapon. The work contains curious specimen of sale and mortgage deeds and interesting cases of litigation of the times in which he lived. The text of Lokaprakasha was full of interpolations upto the 17th century, written in a curious blend of Sanskrit and Persian words.

JDZ also edited jointly with Dr. J.C. Dutt, Manuscript Number 7/E of the famous Gilgit Manuscripts which throw much light on Kashmir's Buddhist past. Bodha Panchadashaka and Parmartha Charcha are other philosophical works edited by him besides Panchastavi Tika, Paratrimshika Laghu Vritti, Paratrimshika Vivritti and Paratrimshika Tatparya Dipika (an abstruse presentation in Snaskrit verse of a highly abstract idea of *anuttara*). In all sixteen Sanskrit texts were edited by him during his tenure as Head Pandit of the Research and Publications Department of Jammu and Kashmir. These include, besides the above mentioned works, 'Prasada Mandapam (a brief treatise on Hindu architecture and sculpture), Prakashavati Pradyumna Natakam, Chitta Pradipa, Alankara Kutuhala and Soma Shambhu's Karmakanda Kramavali (which outlines briefly the principles and procedures of Shaivistic Sandhya Diksha and other rituals).

JDZ was the first Kashmiri scholar to work with Japanese and Russian Sanskrit scholars. In 1913, when he was only in his early twenties, he worked on Shaiva texts with the Japanese scholar Momo Moto Kora. About the same period his English translation of Bhasa's Swapana Vasavdattam guided Victor and Luydmil Mierworth in their Russian translation of the famous Sanskrit play. Together with Prof. Nityanand Shastri, JDZ translated Don Quixote, the famous Spanish classic by Cervantes, into the Kashmiri language as far back as 1936. It was the first translation of any European literary work in Kashmiri, although literary historians of the language have never made any mention of it. The translation was part of the project of Prof. Carl T. Keller of Harvard University to have 'Don Quixote' translated into various languages of the world. The duo, JDZ and NS translated the classic into Sanskrit also, and their translations probably are still lying at Harvard. JDZ passed on his copy of the translation to "a loved

friend" for publications but nothing followed it. The NSKRI is now going to take up publication of the work in view of its historical importance in the development of Kashmiri prose.

JDZ also translated the 'Radha Swayamvara' and 'Sudama Charita' of Parmananda, the famous Kashmir devotional poet of the 19th century, into Hindi.

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to Sanskrit scholarship, His Holiness Jagadguru Shankarcharya of Dwarkapitha conferred upon him the title of Vidya Martand in 1955. He was honoured with the title of Mahamahopadhyaya by the Prayag Vidvat Parishad in 1973, the last of Kashmiri scholars on which this honour was conferred. The Sharadapitha Research Institute, Srinagar, chose to recognise his outstanding work in the field of Indology by awarding the honorary degree of Doctor of Indology to him in 1974, while in 1976 the Pradeshik Snaskrit Parishad of Jammu honoured him for his profound Sanskrit scholarship.

There are many more details and dimensions of JDZ's profile as a scholar, glimpses of which can be had in his unpublished two-volume autobiography in Hindi. It was written a few years before his death in 1981, after prolonged illness. The autobiography, which gives many important details of the erudite scholar's life and times, is replete with his numerous comments and observations on Kashmiri society, culture, religion, literature, language, tradition, customs and even political events of the years in which he lived --- informative, interesting and revealing.

It reveals that his two sons were in the active service of the INA of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. One of them, Kanti Chandra Zadoo was Bose's Personal Secretary. He is believed to have been on board the same air craft which mysteriously crashed in 1945, resulting in the death of Subhash Chandra Bose and Kanti Chandra both. By the time JDZ started writing his autobiography, he was already a forgotten man, partly due to his tendency to stay away from limelight and partly due to the deliberate indifference of the self-appointed cultural czars of post-independence Kashmir.

Oriental Research Institute, Mysore

Appreciates NSKRI Efforts

Dr. K. V. Ramesh, Director, Oriental Research Institute, Mysore, and world renowned epigraphist, felt elated at the steps taken by NS KRI to protect and preserve Kashmir's ancient culture and heritage. He expressed his appreciation of NSKRI's work to Shri S. N. Pandita, Secretary NSKRI, who met him recently at Mysore and apprised him of the Institute's objectives and activities.

Shri Pandita and Shri C. V. Gopinath had gone to visit ORI to find out if there were any Sharada manuscripts at that premier institute for oriental studies in the country. While ORI did not have any such manuscripts in its vast library of 40,000 books and 80,000 manuscripts, their disappointment was more than compensated by the enthusiasm with which ORI scholars, Vidvan Dr. T. V. Sathyanarayanan and Dr. H. V. Nagaraja Rao, and Dr. Ramesh himself, greeted them on learning about NSKRI efforts to preserve the rich heritage of Kashmiri Pandits badly damaged during the decade of militancy in Kashmir.

Dr. Ramesh was particularly happy to know that well known European scholars like Aural Stein, George Grierson, Vogel, Spooner etc. had long scholarly relationships with Kashmiri scholars like Nityanand Shastri, Mukundram Shastri, Govind Koul and Harabatta Shastri and that it had preserved a number of letters written by some of these scholars to Prof. Nityanand Shastri.

Dr. Ramesh expressed his happiness over the fact that "such a rich collection of national wealth and materials of very significant oriental value were well preserved and safe with NSKRI". He proposed that letters and documents in possession of NSKRI could be jointly published by ORI and NSKRI for international appreciation.

Dr. Ramesh, an internationally known epigraphist, recalled his scholarly association with Kashmiri scholars like Dr. Bhushan Kaul Dembi, whose work on the Sharada script has been widely lauded.

Twentytwo Sanskrit Libraries existed in the heart of Srinagar

Well-known Indologist George Buhler came to Kashmir in the late seventies of the last century in search of Sanskrit manuscripts and published his famous Report in 1878. As he found out, it was a time when Sanskrit learning was still thriving among the Kashmiri Pandits who prided themselves for possessing large collections of works on different subjects in the language. As many as twentytwo Sanskrit libraries existed during the time of Buhler's visit, some of them virtually large store houses of Sanskrit manuscripts, carefully and systematically preserved. Of these eleven existed in the very heart of Srinagar—Habba Kadal !

"Who were the possessors of these most considerable collection of manuscripts?" it would be natural to ask using Buhler's own words ? Extensive research and exploration of different references in this regard has yielded fruit. NSKRI has been able to identify by the names of these twenty-two Kashmiri Pandits who possessed the well-kept libraries that came handy for Buhler and others to use. The names of these Kashmiri Sanskrit scholars, along with the addresses where they lived are given below :

1. Dayaram	Resident of Habba Kadal
2. Keshavram	--do--
3. Suraj Kak	--do--
4. Bida Sahib	--do--
5. Ram Koul Sahib	--do--
6. Mahtab Joo	--do--
7. Sahaj Kaul	--do--
8. Raj Kak	--do--
9. Kaval Ramdan	--do--
10. Chand Ram	--do--
11. Mahanand Joo	--do--
12. Lal Pandit	Resident of Kani Kadal,
13. Kamal Raidan	--do--
14. Gopal Kokilu	Resident of Bana Mohlla,
15. Prakash Chand	Resident of Ganesh Ghat,
16. Janardan	--do--
17. Prakash Mekh	Residence not identified
18. Mukund Jotshi	--do--
19. Hari Ram Jotshi	--do--
20. Daya Ram Jotshi	Resident of Sathu Barbar Shah
21. Tota Ram Jotshi	Resident of Rainawari
22. Balakak	Resident of Safakadal

Forgotten names ? May be. But NSKRI is happy at having at last found them out and reviving their memory even though their rich collections no longer exist.

(Input: S. N. Pandita)

BALLET ON LALLESHWARI -- A CULTURAL SHOCK

People who had come to the Kamani Auditorium, New Delhi on February 21, to watch the "colourful presentation" of the "ballet" "Paramyogini Lalleshwari", were mostly driven by reverence for the great 14th century saint poetess whose name has become synonymous with Kashmiri ethos. (Many of them had the impression that it was a NSKRI show.) What they expected was to have the pleasure of watching an enthralling spiritual musical bringing out various dimensions of Lalleshwari's personality and poetry. Little did they know that they were in for a rude cultural shock. The "ballet" showed Lalleshwari; the great Shaiva Yogini, most revered icon of Kashmiri Pandit wisdom and culture, dressed from head to toes in Muslim attire -- embroidered Pheran, Qasaba and all !

In one stroke the organizers of the show had done what all the fundamentalists from G. M. D. Sofi down to his present-day versions persistently wanted to do -- appropriating Lalleshwari to Islam !

You could see her dressed as a Muslim girl moving up and down the stage, giving one the impression that she was either born Muslim or was converted to Islam. And why only she, her whole milieu was shown like that -- the males wearing the Khan dress (which incidentally is the national dress in Pakistan) and Muslim prayer caps, and females the Qasabas, Salwars and embroidered Pherans (perhaps purchased straight from a Kashmir Government Arts Emporium showroom). They sang songs in Qawali style (alien to Kashmir) and danced Muslim dances set to the strains of a music imposed by the Pathans. Were it not for the "*vyapta charachara*" hymn of Abhinavgupta -- the only redeeming feature of the show -- one would naturally think that the Kashmiri society in Lalleshwari's time had adopted Islamic ways *en masse*. And if that was not enough, a quaint looking figure--something of a cross between the *saada makkaar* and the *kuly fakir* wearing the

overflowing robes of a dancing dervish, would occasionally appear on the stage to mumble interjections linking the various sequences.

So that was how Lalleshwari and her times were presented in the what was termed as a "ballet" by its organizers, making quite a number of people in the audience gnash their teeth at the abominations. To the organizers -- the one-man Lalleshwari International Trust and the Abhinav Educational and Cultural Society -- it seemed to matter little if they made history to stand on its head. For one there was money in the "mega event" and for the other the satisfaction of becoming a cultural tzar overnight. And if in the process Kashmiri culture, which Lalleshwari had such an important hand in shaping, got wildly distorted, well it was none of their concern.

The one-man Lalleshwari International Trust (one wonders who are its other members and what is 'international' about it) had been creating a hype through leaflets and ads for over one year about "a humble effort to present a mega effort to the people and humanity at large"(whatever that may mean) about the life and teachings of "Mirabai of Kashmir" and "second Rabia of Basra".

But what does history say about the saint-poetess and the age in which she lived? At the time when she was born, Kashmir had seen only three years of Muslim rule when Rinchana (1320-23) became the Sultan after converting to Islam. After Rinchana's death Hindu rule was restored in Kashmir till Shahmir finally established the rule of his dynasty in 1339 after snatching the throne from Kota Rani by perfidy. Yet, for quite sometime Hindus remained in a majority and it was difficult to distinguish the minority Muslims from them so far as social customs and living style were concerned. According to Mohib-ul Hassan, the ordinary people and even the king, till at least Qutub-ud-din's reign, wore largely

what was the Hindu dress of the times. It was Syed Ali Hamdani who exhorted Qutub-ud-Din and his Muslim subjects to wear Muslim attire -- an advice that was more followed in its breach till Sikandar Butshikan came on the scene.

How people dressed exactly in Lalleshwari's age, especially the Hindus, needs much research to find out. And that requires deep study and research -- something that didn't look to be the organisers' cup of tea.

At the end of the show some people who know a little about Lalleshwari as a poet and a saint were heard complaining, "But where was Lalleshwari in all this?" Her spiritual anguish, her intense quest for Shiva, the powerful rhythm of her thought vibrating in her soul-elevating Vaks, her defiant spirit and revolutionary personality -- nothing seemed to emerge from it, they felt.

There is much more that can be asked about the content as well as the form of the "ballet" 'Paramyogini Lalleshwari'. For instance, which spiritual movements were taking place in West Asia at the time Lal Ded was composing her Vaks in Kashmir? And what is the point sought to be made by referring to them? Also, what has Bulle Shah to do with her being "Paramyogini", or for that matter Kabir or Nanak? What was the purpose in juxtaposing them together as referral points to understand Lal Ded when they were so far removed in time from her?

Authentic or not, the organizers had to put up a show and that they did with everything that is supposed to go with the notion of Kashmiriat -- the colourfully embroidered pherans, the salwars, the Muslim skull-caps, the Rov dance and of course, that blah-blah-blah about universal love and brotherhood and Sufism -- the new buzz-word.

"Was Lalleshwari a Sufi?" some were seen asking. The organisers, of course, had their own compulsions. If Kashmir had to be shown, Sufism has got to be there. And if Lalleshwari was not

exactly a Sufi, well, she did attempt some sort of a synthesis between Sufism and Shaivism -- they seemed to think. But where, pray, in which of her verses precisely? Had Sufism really reached Kashmir in her time? These questions do not seem to have bothered them. The fact, however, is that her imagined meeting with Syed Ali Hamadani actually never took place, as proved so convincingly by Prof Jai Lal Kaul in his excellent book on Lal Ded. (The story seems to have been fabricated to suggest Islam's superiority over Shaiva philosophy.) Even if she did, Syed Hamadani was no Sufi. He was a missionary preaching Sunni Islam; and for the Sunnis Sufism is said to be an anathema. But why such extra emphasis on Lalleshwari having blended Sufism with Shaiva thought, one would like to ask.

As for as form is concerned, "Paramyogini Lalleshwari" can be hardly called a ballet or even a dance drama for that matter, for it had virtually no storyline. The prose narration was neither here nor there. The so-called "colourful presentation" was puerile and very mediocre. So was music. There was nothing, in fact, that evoked the ambience of Lal Ded's time and her verses.

Yet the two organizers were seen patting each other's back, snug and satisfied. The cake of course, went to Delhi's Education Minister Narendra Nath, the VIP guest who was invited to speak at the end and could not even pronounce Lalleshwari's name. "Laaleeshwari", he revealed, "wrote poetry in the 14th century and also worshipped Shiva!"

While everyone is free to put up "mega shows" and "colourful presentations", it must be said that the ballet outraged the sensibilities of many, particularly those who regard Lalleshwar as an icon of Shaiva faith and the most revered symbol of Kashmiri culture. She was a poet who touched such great heights that no other Kashmiri poet has so far been able to scale. The questions that such shows are bound to raise are: Does anyone with some cash to spare have the liberty to distort cultural facts? And can anyone be allowed to trivialise Lalleshwari in such a frivolous manner?

-- S. S. T.

Appeal for Donations

Do you feel pride in your Kashmiri Pandit identity and are you concerned about saving that identity from the threats it is facing? Do you think that something must be done immediately to protect and preserve Kashmiri Pandit culture and heritage in the present disconcerting situation? Are you interested in the study of various aspects of Kashmiri Pandit cultural, religious, literary and artistic traditions and want that these traditions be kept alive? Then now is the time to act. Join the NSKRI as a member. It is not just an organisation, it is a movement. The membership is open to you in one of the following two categories:-

Life Membership : **Rs. 3,000/-** (one time)

Associate Membership : **Rs. 1,000/-** (annual)

You can send your crossed cheque or Demand Draft in favour of :

N. S. Kashmir Research Institute, D-7/7175, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi - 110 070

An increasing number of our readers and well-wishers have been constantly asking us to fix subscription rates for 'Unmesh'. While we still feel hesitant about accepting the suggestion as such, we also understand the difficulties in continuing the publication of Unmesh without adequate financial support. We therefore, request all such well-wishers of ours as are interested in helping us to bring out the newsletter regularly, to send us their donations instead. All such donations, preferably in multiples of Rs.100/- sent through crossed cheque or demand draft will now onwards be thankfully accepted.

M. L. Pandit

GAURI SHANKAR RAINA GETS SENIOR H.R.D. FELLOWSHIP

Playwright, television producer, and theatre director Gauri Shankar Raina has been given senior fellowship of H.R.D. Ministry for his project: "Television Natak Adhar aur Akar".

Theatre has been young Raina's great love from his high school days when he would write and direct plays for a small theatre group formed by him. Among the plays he staged Kashmiri translation of Girish Karnad's, 'Hay Vadan' won him the J & K Cultural Academy's award. Other plays successfully staged by him include Moti Lal Kemmu's 'Lalla Main to Prem Diwani', 'Chidiya Ghar' and 'Chakravayuh'.

His stage experience came handy when he entered Television and became a Doordarshan producer. His TV film 'Angela' was chosen the best T.V. film from India at the Asian T.V. Film Festival. His documentary 'The Golden Art' was highly praised in SAARC countries where it was screened. 'Bheegi Dhoop', 'Adhikar', 'Anubhuti', 'Farar', 'Khandhar', 'Vidai', 'Parivartan' and 'Bandhan' are some other well appreciated plays produced by G. S. Raina on television.

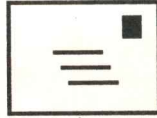
Young and brilliant Raina is a playwright himself, 'Ek Wahi Main' being a collection of three short plays written by him. He also is an ace translator. His Hindi translation of Moti Lal Kemmu's Kashmiri play 'Tota aur Aina' won him the H.R.D. Ministry award for non-Hindi speaking writers. 'Palne ka Poot' is his Hindi translation of another Kashmiri play by Moti Lal Kemmu. At present Raina is working on a TV documentary 'Women in Indian Sculpture'.

NSKRI congratulates Gauri Shankar Raina for being awarded Senior HRD Fellowship and wishes him a brilliant success in his creative pursuits.

Nagmani Fellowship for Dr. C. L. Raina

Well Known scholar of Shaktivad, Dr. Chaman Lal Raina has been awarded the Nagmani Fellowship for Honour and Excellence.

Dr. Raina has been awarded the Fellowship for one year for 1999 to work on the project "Words and Visuals for Inner Awareness". The Fellowship has been instituted by the Punjab Monthly 'Nagmani' brought out by the eminent Punjabi poet and writer, Amrita Pritam and Imroz



Stein's translation of Rajatarangini

I would like you to take Dr. Lokesh Chandra seriously when he says "I always do not find the reading in Rajatarangini very clearly understandable". This he refers to the translation by Dr. Aurel Stein. I will give to you an instance from my memory. At a place in his translation Sir Stein describes a king ruling for 300 years. It could have been a dynasty but it is not said so. I talked about it to many, among them a Professor of University of Kashmir. His answer was stunning. He said Sir Stein did not know Sanskrit, not that he did not know Sharada.

*P.N. JOTSHI
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Kingsway, Delhi- 110 009*

'Remembering Sir Aurel Stein' Exhibition

I was highly impressed by the seminar and exhibition organised jointly by NSKRI and Hungarian Information and Cultural Centre on Nov. 16, 1998 at 1-A, Janpath, New Delhi. The display of Sir Aurel Stein's original letter to some Kashmiri Pandit scholars, documents, manuscripts and photographs of Kashmiri Sanskrit scholars associated with Sir Aurel Stein was excellent. That NSKRI has preserved these valuable documents is really a great achievement. Such efforts need to be admired and encouraged. Eminent scholars of the world have attested to the fact that Kashmir has been a great centre of learning. NSKRI is doing an excellent work by projecting the contribution of Kashmiri Pandits in various fields of learning and literature.

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Delhi- 110085*

Tabulate information from Rajatarangini for children

While remembering Sir Aurel Stein, Kalhana's Rajatarangini stuck to my mind. Frankly speaking our children have no idea of Rajatarangini -- what it is. The future generation may curse us if we will not educate our children about Rajatarangini.

Let us do something step by step in this direction as it is not possible to publish Rajatarangini in a single issue (of Unmesh). I suggest that information about kings of Kashmir be given in a chronological order along with a list of monuments pertaining to different periods. This information can be gleaned from the Rajatarangini itself. Years back, in 1955 this work was done by Mr. T. N. Khazanchi and was published in the Kashmir Issue of MARG. But 44 years have passed since then and our children do not have any access to it. This information may now be reprinted for the benefit of our children. I hope you will find this suggestion worth consideration.

I may also inform you that earliest Kharosthi letters have been discovered on a pot sherd found at Semthan in district Bijbehara long back. This was published in Indian Archaeology A Review. I do not exactly remember the year, but if you think it is worthwhile to reproduce it, I will try to locate the publication. Prof. Dembi, who is presently at Dharamshala (H.P.) has also studied these earliest Kharosthi marks along with other inscriptions and has mentioned them in one of his books.

*RAJANATH KAW
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KP Internet Services

Sunil Fotedar

Plano, Texas, USA

URL: <http://fotedar.org>

e-mail: sunil@fotedar.org

In order to counter the disinformation campaign launched against the miniscule Kashmiri Pandit (KP) community by the Muslims in the West through the use of Internet, a team of dedicated KP individuals in the USA have created two web sites, *Kashmir Information Network (KIN)* and *Kashmiri Overseas Association of USA (KOAUSA)*.

The KIN web site carries information about the on-going struggle of the KPs as refugees in their own country, the conditions that prevailed in the valley before their exodus, their history of survival through centuries of persecution at the hands of cruel Muslim rulers in the valley, the detailed case analyses of various KP individuals killed by the Pakistan-sponsored militants, and several massacres of the KPs that have taken place after their exodus. This web site is a repository describing the ethnic cleansing of the KPs from the valley of Kashmir.

The Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA) is a non-profit, cultural organization of the KPs settled in the USA. Its aim is to promote, protect and preserve the unique ethno-cultural identity of the KPs in the West. Their web site (KOAUSA) is a repository of information on the KPs detailing their culture, history and religion. This web site also carries paintings by KP artists, Kashmiri Music and several video documentaries, Chat and on-line Matrimonial services, among many other things.

These web sites are located at the following internet addresses:

1. **Kashmir Information Network (KIN) :** <http://www.kashmir-information.com>
2. **Kashmir Overseas Association of USA (KOAUSA) :** <http://www.koausa.org>

In addition to these web sites, we have also started our own private e-mail club called the *KPnet*. The KPnet is designed to be a forum where views and news about Kashmir imbroglio, articles about our unique culture, religion, history, and current political affairs, are freely exchanged. Subscription to the KPnet service is free and available to a KP with a valid e-mail address anywhere around the world, and can be requested by sending an e-mail to the following e-mail address:

koausa@koausa.org

Past issues of *Unmesh* are located at the following internet address:

<http://www.koausa.org/NSKRI/Unmesh>

and the web site address for NSKRI is located at:

<http://www.koausa.org/NSKRI>

The Saptarishi Samvatsara

Time is eternal. It is the rhythm of divine pulsation. However, it is only linear or chronological time in which life unfolds itself on this universe. So when we talk of the Saptarishi Samvatsara followed by Kashmiri Pandits we have to travel back in time to the people of Satisar, the ancestors of the present day Kashmiri Pandits.

Why is the name of the Saptarishis associated with this era? Legend goes that some 5074 years ago Saptarishis, the seven great sages of the Hindus, came to Sharika Parvat, the abode of goddess Sharika at the auspicious moment when the first ray of sun fell on Chakreshwara, and paid obeisance to her. The place where they are said to have assembled is still called Sata Reshy. It is a rock where devotees of the goddess go to ask for a boon and meditate upon Mahakali to attain *siddhi*. Astrologers made this auspicious moment the starting point for their calculation of the Nava Varsha Pratipada.

— Dr. C. L. Raina

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